Please amend the application as follows:

Amendments to the Claims:

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) The process for positioning a first sample plate in an analytical apparatus and for removing a second sample plate from the analytical apparatus which comprises:

(a) moving said first sample plate into said analytical apparatus along an entry path having a first direction; and

(b) concomitantly with step (a) moving said second sample plate from said analytical apparatus along an exit path in a second direction opposite said first direction, at least a portion of which is vertically spaced apart from said entry path and which prevents collision of said first sample plate with said second sample plate.

2. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for positioning a first sample plate in an analytical apparatus and for removing a second sample plate from the analytical apparatus which comprises:

(a) means for moving said first sample plate into said analytical apparatus along an entry path having a first direction; and

(b) means for moving said second sample plate concomitantly with movement of said first sample plate from said analytical apparatus along an exit path in a second direction opposite said first direction, at least a portion of which is positioned in a vertically spaced apart position from said entry path while avoiding collision of said first sample plate with said second sample plate.

3. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein a portion of said entry path is positioned below said exit path.

4. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein a portion of said entry path is positioned above said exit path.

5. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein a portion of said entry path is positioned below said exit path.

6. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein a portion of said entry path is positioned above said exit path.

7. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 2 including means for reversing said ~~wherein~~ a first direction for moving said first sample plate and a said second direction for moving said second sample plate ~~are reversed~~ after completing moving said first sample plate by ~~step~~ means (a) and said second plate by ~~step~~ means (b).

8. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 5 including means for reversing said ~~wherein a~~ first direction for moving said first sample plate and ~~a~~ said second direction for moving said second sample plate ~~are reversed~~ after completing moving said first sample plate by ~~step~~ means (a) and said second plate by ~~step~~ means (b).

9. (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 6 including means for reversing said ~~wherein a~~ first direction for moving said first sample plate and ~~a~~ said second direction for moving said second sample plate ~~are reversed~~ after completing moving said first sample plate by ~~step~~ means (a) and said second plate by ~~step~~ means (b).

10. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 1 wherein a said first direction for moving said first sample plate and a said second direction for moving said second sample plate are reversed after completing moving said first sample plate by step (a) and said second plate by step (b).

11. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 3 wherein a said first direction for moving said first sample plate and a said second direction for moving said second sample plate are reversed after completing moving said first sample plate by step (a) and said second plate by step (b).

12. (Currently Amended) The process of claim 4 ~~wherein the apparatus of claim 2~~ wherein a said first direction for moving said first sample plate and a said second direction for

moving said second sample plate are reversed after completing moving said first sample plate by step (a) and said second plate by step (b).

13. (Original) The apparatus of claim 2 wherein the analytical apparatus comprises a MALDI-TOF mass spectrometer.

14. (Original) The process of claim 1 wherein the analytical apparatus comprises a MALDI-TOF mass spectrometer.

15. (New) The apparatus of claim 6 wherein the analytical apparatus comprises a MALDI-TOF mass spectrometer.

16. (New) The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the analytical apparatus comprises a MALDI-TOF mass spectrometer.

17. (New) A sample plate transport device for an analytical apparatus comprising:

a first movable transport member for holding a first sample plate and for moving the first sample plate toward or away from the analytical apparatus along a first path having a first direction;

a second movable transport member for holding a second sample plate and for moving the second sample along a second path different from the first path and in a second direction opposite the first direction;

wherein the first and second sample plates are moved concomitantly toward or away from the analytical apparatus and at least a portion of the first and second paths are positioned in a vertically spaced apart position to avoid collision of the first sample plate with the second sample plate during movement thereof.

18. (New) The device of claim 17 wherein a portion of the first path is positioned below the second path.

19. (New) The device of claim 17 wherein a portion of the first path is positioned above the second path.

20. (New) The device of claim 17 wherein the analytical apparatus comprises a MALDI-TOF mass spectrometer.